



## mallard

*Anas platyrhynchos*

Kingdom: Animalia  
 Division/Phylum: Chordata - vertebrates  
 Class: Aves  
 Order: Anseriformes  
 Family: Anatidae

## Features

The mallard is 20 to 28 inches long. The male has a shiny green head, a white ring around its neck, a gray body with a brown chest, and a violet-blue wing patch. The female has a brown-and-cream speckled body. Both the male and the female have a white tail, orange feet, and a yellow bill.

## Natural History

The mallard lives in or around marshes, ditches, swamps, grain fields, ponds, rivers, and lakes. It commonly is seen in urban areas. It eats aquatic plants, corn, grasses, seeds, small aquatic animals, and insects. The male's call is a reedy "yeeb -yeeb." The female quacks like a barnyard duck. Mallards form mating pairs in the fall but do not mate until spring. Spring migrants begin arriving in Iowa in February. Nesting occurs from April through July. Seven to 16 blue-green eggs per clutch are laid in a nest on the ground. The nest is lined with grasses, leaves, and feathers. Mallards occasionally nest in

trees. The female incubates the eggs and cares for the young. One brood per year is raised. Most mallards nest in southern Canada, but nesting does occur in Iowa. Mallards are unable to fly for about one month in late summer when they are molting their flight feathers. Fall migration begins in September. In the winter the birds fly away from water to feed in the early morning, return to the water to rest during the middle of the day, and fly out again in the evening to feed, returning to the water for the night. The mallard is the most harvested duck in Iowa. It also is the most numerous of Iowa's ducks. If open water is available, mallards will overwinter in Iowa.

## Habitats

Mississippi River; Missouri River; interior rivers and streams; natural lakes and prairie marshes; constructed lakes, ponds, and reservoirs; temporary water supplies; wet prairies and fens

## Iowa Status

common; native

## Iowa Range

year-round: statewide

## Bibliography

Iowa Department of Natural Resources. 2001.  
*Biodiversity of Iowa: Aquatic Habitats* CD-ROM.